

City drugs, sex ring bust

GIRLS AS YOUNG AS 12 RESCUED IN JOINT COP OPERATION IN RUSTENBURG

ELFAS TORERAI

SIX girls were rescued from drug and sex rings during a crackdown on criminal activities in Rustenburg yesterday.

The police said yesterday indications were that the girls, some as young as 12, were used as prostitutes in brothels in the platinum city.

One of the girls is from Bethlehem in Free State, another from Klerksdorp while the rest are from areas within Rustenburg.

The police also said the girls were allegedly lured by male drug dealers in hijacked buildings in the city centre.

Public safety officials from the Rustenburg local municipality worked with officials from the police, immigration, traffic, social workers and community policing forums to clamp down on crime in the city.

Upon searching buildings and vehicles, they found one of the girls, who is heavily pregnant and took her to a place of safety.

Rustenburg mayor Mpho Khunou said the joint operation was part of the municipality's safe and clean city campaign.

"The campaign aims at ensuring safety, security and cleanliness for all communities of Rustenburg," Khunou said.

The mayor said the operation, which will be conducted on a weekly basis, started in Rustenburg East, an area notorious for drug dealing.

"We have so far achieved very good intended objectives, namely the number of problem buildings was identified, wherein six girls, aged 12 up to early 20s, were rescued from their handlers who deal in drug smuggling and human trafficking."

During the clampdown, illegal immigrants were identified and duly charged for being in the country without necessary documentation.

The police said the trafficking of young

girls was a reality and most are used as sex slaves by their handlers who then put them on the market for prostitution purposes while they pocket the proceeds. Officials also managed to close down problem buildings used as brothels. Drugs and stolen vehicles used to commit crime were also found.

"We are serious about uprooting crime out of Rustenburg. We relaunched the safe and clean city campaign earlier this year with the spirit that we shall not tolerate nor condone crime in our city," Khunou said.

"We are attacking it in all fronts. We are busy mobilising our communities to rise against crime wherever they are, so that we together nip it in the bud." The municipality has also organised a march residents are expected to take part in this week.

"We will together with our stakeholders, be patrolling our streets and conducting special operations randomly, unannounced, as well as doing marches together with residents, as we will be doing this Friday starting at 5pm at the Rustenburg East Bobby Sport Grounds, proceeding to identified hot spots.

"By so doing we will together be propelling Rustenburg into a world class city where all communities enjoy high quality of life."

Capt. Elisebe Augoustides of the Rustenburg police said young women should not befriend strangers, particularly on social media.

"Never place naked photos of yourself on social media, it is circulated by ruthless men with bad intentions, you might even later be blackmailed into committing acts you do not wish to participate in, for fear of exposure," Augoustides said.

"Do not abuse alcohol, your drinks might easily be 'spiked' and never ever use drugs."

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CRACKDOWN: Police conduct random searches after a group of young girls, who were used as prostitutes in brothels, were rescued from human traffickers in Rustenburg.

Discovered bones could be missing girls'

OBAKENG MAJE

THE hope of finding two missing girls alive has faded after bones were discovered in a shallow grave in Bloemhof three weeks ago.

The bones, believed to belong to the two missing girls from Boitumelong location, in Bloemhof were taken in for forensic analysis.

Matseleng Nteta, seven, and her friend, Rethabile Tshabadira, three, went missing more than nine months ago. They were reportedly playing in the street and were last seen going to the local tuck shop to buy sweets.

North West police spokesperson Brig Sabata Mokgwabone confirmed that unknown bones were discovered in Bloemhof.

However, Mokgwabone said the bones were taken in for forensic analysis.

"We can confirm that bones were discovered in the area three weeks ago.

However, the bones were taken in for DNA and the results are not yet out.

They were discovered by a passer-by who went to the bushes to relieve himself. He saw the skull and reported the matter to the police.

"No one has been arrested as yet and police have opened an inquest case.

"The case will only be changed to murder after DNA results. We urge our people to be calm and continue to work together with the police in reporting criminal activities taking place in their vicinities.

The police will continue to serve our communities with pride and combat crime," he said.

He said the DNA results will be released in about four weeks.

The parents of the missing girls said they want closure.

Matseleng's mother, Maria Nteta, 28, said: "We are still waiting for the forensic test results.

We lost hope a long time ago in the police because nothing positive came out of their investigations.

It seems they have also hit a dead end.

I miss my daughter so much and I am looking for closure."

Rethabile's grandmother, Lenah Tshabadira, 49, said the police had failed them dismally. She said the police did not put in any extra effort to find the children.

"Rethabile was a bubbly person. The police took 48 hours to intensify a search.

"We could have found them in time if they reacted earlier.

"However, we will remain confident and wait for the DNA test," she said.

Dr Ruth Mompoti region social activist, Mika Moeti said: "We will work closely with police to ensure that the perpetrator/s is caught.

"We cannot continue to live normal while we have missing children.

"They have families and it is wrong for monsters to do as they please within our communities."

- Newsnote

'Communities feel neglected'

ZODIDI MHLANA

INDEPENDENT policing researcher Dr Johan Burger believes that law enforcement agencies should work with communities to prevent residents from taking the law into their own hands.

Burger said poor communities often resort to taking the law into their hands as they have no confidence in the police.

"It's a combination of things that need to be done. The police need to be on top of their game to regain the trust of their communities. When they receive calls from communities about criminal activities taking place, they need to act on that information when there's a need for them to detain the suspect," Burger said.

His remarks come after community members in Rustenburg recently set alight three houses, accusing the occupants of being involved in illegal activities.

On a number of occasions, residents have taken the law into their own hands.

In March last year, provincial police commissioner Lt Baile Motswenyane expressed concern about several incidents of mob justice in the province.

Motswenyane said the police were investigating 40 cases of vigilantism with a number of suspects behind bars.

Last week, four people

accused of stoning a 50-year-old man to death during a mob justice attack appeared in the Brits, Magistrate's Court.

The man was killed after being accused of raping a teenage girl.

In February last year, two men were set alight by angry community members who accused them of stealing a car in Freedom Park phase one in Phokeng in the North West.

In 2015, two people were killed in Sondela section in Boitekong.

Burger said such attacks were prevalent in poor communities where residents felt neglected.

"Very often, communities out of desperation commit acts of violence such as burning or destroying property because they feel left behind or neglected by authorities in terms of services such as water and lights.

They feel that the state has forgotten about them and feel that they have to resort to these kinds of violence to draw attention to their problems.

"It's important that we have awareness campaigns in communities informing people about their rights and responsibilities. What recourse they have if their complaints are not addressed. They need to be informed about the alternatives available to them."

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NEGLECT: Residents resort to violence in desperation.

TNA-15/11/17 - NWSAPS - P98 - Neutral

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